A Safe Passage Through Britannia

Commissioned by Lord British

Compiled by Nystul, Magician to the Court

Transcribed by Austin Grossman, Scribe

Be it known, that in this troubled time of reconstruction, I, Lord British, have decreed that there shall be assembled a manuscript, entitled A Safe Passage Through Britannia. *This document shall serve all those who would travel within my lands, and address a new generation of Britannians, who are only now coming of age and exploring the world around them. Those who are unschooled in history shall learn of Britannia's glorious and turbulent past, and of the troubles that beset these lands. They shall learn of the Stranger, a hero from another world, who triumphed over these troubles and became the Avatar. More, they shall learn of our most recent trial, through the insidious corruption of our land by the Guardian, soul of evil, and his failed attempt to enter our realm in physical form. In addition, those who read this work shall be taught what little we know of the worlds that lie beyond our own. Those who would walk the paths of adventure shall learn of the many professions that able young women and men may follow in this world, and the physical and mental skills they must acquire in order to achieve mastery over the trials that shall beset them. They shall be introduced to the arcane forces that underlie the reality of the visible world, forces that wizards can martial at their command. And most importantly, the reader shall learn of the Eight Virtues — the Way of the Avatar — the moral principles that maintain an atmosphere of peace and mutual benevolence among our citizens. Lastly, there shall be included a Bestiary, a catalogue of creatures, including both those that occur in nature and those that are the creations of sorcerers, those that live naturally and those unnatural beings that have died once, yet live on in some form. Let the Wise Adventurer take note of what is contained in this section, as knowledge of one's opponent is often the key to survival. For the purpose of compiling this knowledge, I have enlisted the unequaled wisdom and scholarship of Nystul, Chief Magician of the Realm. I can imagine no more complete source of information and advice for the young traveler.*

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BRITANNIA

The history of Britannia is a long and turbulent narrative, which for convenience I shall divide into seven parts, corresponding to seven crises which menaced the land. The earliest recorded histories take place during a period known as the Age of Darkness. At this time, the land as a whole was known as Sosaria, and Lord British ruled a smaller nation called Britain. This was a chaotic and difficult period to live in — rival states were constantly at war with one another, and bandits and monsters roamed freely over the countryside, preying on those weaker than they. It was in this period that the Triad of Evil came forth to threaten the land. The first of these was Mondain, a young man who had slain his father (a powerful and respected sorcerer in his own right), and seized a powerful magic jewel, which he believed could make him immortal. He and his evil servants ravaged the land and began building a kingdom of darkness that threatened to encompass all Sosaria. It was at this time that the Avatar, then known only as the Stranger, first came forth from the other world, to answer the call of Lord British. It was the Stranger who defeated Mondain, and restored peace for a brief time in Sosaria. This peace soon ended, however, with the rise of Minax, Mondain's apprentice and his child bride. Minax organized the evil beings of Sosaria under her powerful direction, and again devastated the land with dire sendings. Again, the Stranger appeared and battled the evil confronting the land, traveling through time and space, finally tracking Minax to the Time of Legends before slaying her. After the demise of Minax, Lord British, widely recognized for his wisdom and virtue, ascended to the rulership of all Sosaria. Soon, though, a mysterious fiery island rose from the sea, and once again peace in Sosaria was disrupted. This time, the Stranger assembled a group of four heroes, and these four crisscrossed the land and braved the horrors of Britannia's underground dungeons, until they had located and destroyed the mighty Exodus, mystic child of Mondain and Minax's union, part human and part machine. This was the end of the Triad of Evil, and in the ensuing celebration Sosaria was renamed Britannia, a single nation united under the rule of Lord British. A period of growth and prosperity followed, and Lord British turned his attention to philosophy, the nature of virtue, and the perfectibility of humankind. In each of Britannia's eight cities he established a shrine devoted to the study and perfection of one of the Eight Virtues. In addition, he founded institutions devoted to the

three great principles of Truth, Love and Courage. The call went out for one who would become the Avatar, the living incarnation of these abstract virtues and principles, and once again the Stranger answered this call. This mighty champion of arms now became a moral hero, as well, and aided by eight strong Companions, at last retrieved the Codex of Ultimate Wisdom from within the Great Stygian Abyss. It was shortly thereafter that disaster struck the land. Bringing the Codex to the surface triggered a violent seismic upheaval that opened up a vast complex of caverns, the Underworld. Lord British led an expedition to map the caves, and was captured by the Shadowlords of Falsehood, Hatred and Cowardice, who had been released from three shards of Mondain's lost Gem of Immortality. Lord Blackthorn, ruler of the land in British's absence, was possessed by the Shadowlords, and instituted a vicious totalitarian government. Once again, the Avatar, aided by the Companions, stood fast in defense of Britannia, this time as rebels opposing Blackthorn's new regime. In time the Shadowlords were destroyed, our Lord British rescued and Blackthorn exiled. Peace flowed throughout the land for years, until it was discovered that the Avatar's earlier victory in claiming the Codex carried its own terrible price. The upheaval following the retrieval of the Codex destroyed the homeland of the Gargoyles, an ancient and civilized race living on the far side of the world from Britannia. Unwittingly, the Avatar had partially fulfilled an ancient prophecy of the Gargoyles, that a false prophet would one day steal their most holy artifact (the Codex of Ultimate Wisdom), destroy their homeland and then lead a genocidal war against their race. The Avatar had already fulfilled two-thirds of this prophecy (by unwittingly stealing the Codex and triggering the destructive earthquake), and the Gargoyles were not eager to see it completed. They invaded Britannia and captured all eight of the sacred shrines of Virtue. The situation seemed desperate, until the Avatar realized the true reason for the Gargoyles' hostility. Displaying wisdom as well as martial prowess, the Avatar resolved the interracial conflict by giving both humans and Gargoyles access to the Codex. There followed another period of peace, this one lasting almost two hundred years. In this time the Avatar returned only once more, in a little-known expedition to prevent a foolhardy wizard from allowing a powerful demon, the Slasher of Veils, to gain access to our reality. Unable to destroy the Slasher, the Avatar banished it to the Ethereal Void, inadvertently setting off a volcanic eruption that destroyed, once and for all, Britannia's Great Stygian Abyss.

The Guardian, and the story of the Black gate. In recent years, an extradimensional being who styles himself "the Guardian" made a stealthy attempt to conquer this world. Of this being we know little — only that he wields great sorcerous power and is utterly evil. With the aid of the wizard Batlin, he created an organization known as The Fellowship, which claimed devotion to the establishment of a new spiritual philosophy. The higher initiates of The Fellowship were gradually seizing power throughout the land, spreading corruption, and carrying out the Guardian's hidden purposes. At the same time, the Guardian created in Britannia three gigantic blackrock "generators." One of these, the Cube, allowed him to speak to his followers telepathically; a second, the Tetrahedron, disrupted the magical ether that powers magic in Britannia and drove magic users such as myself temporarily insane; and one of these, the Sphere, interrupted the functioning of the Moongates. Blackrock is a magical substance, a black gemlike material unworkable by any known physical means, which is opaque to all magical energy. Meanwhile, the Guardian's followers were engaged in the construction of the Black Gate, a magical portal which would give the Guardian physical access to our plane of reality. Indeed, it seemed that the Guardian's plan was well on its way to success. Had it not been for the Avatar, returning for the first extended period in 200 Britannian years, all might have been lost. But it was the Avatar who first discovered the sinister true nature of The Fellowship, who disabled the three blackrock generators, and who, finally, discovered the location of the Black Gate itself and destroyed it. I must emphasize the extent of the Avatar's self-sacrifice in this matter, as the Black Gate represented the only means of return travel to the Avatar's homeland, Earth. Since that time, we of the realm have been engaged in a massive project of reconstruction. The Guardian's corruption was widespread, and has left us with many confounding problems. For example, we must reintegrate reformed Fellowship members into society, revitalize the economy, rehabilitate those afflicted by serpent venom and clean up Britannia's polluted landscape. I can only count it as our good fortune to have the Avatar here in Britannia to assist us in this, and to guard the realm from any future menaces.

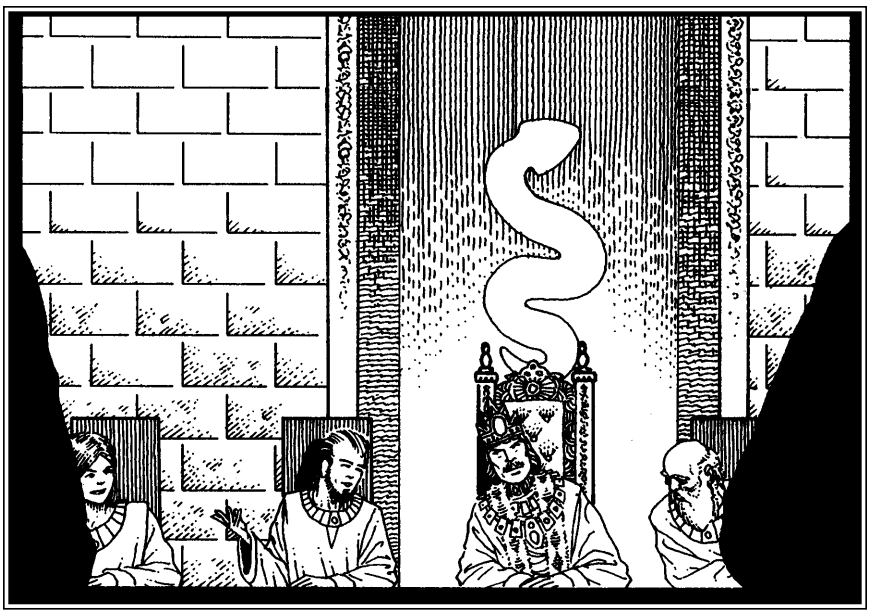
A warning: although The Fellowship has officially been disbanded, many of its members have survived, and there are rumors that it still exists and operates in secret.

RECONSTRUCTION

The Reconstruction is a nationwide effort to repair the social and environmental corruption spread in Britannia by The Fellowship. It is being executed at all levels of government, from Lord British and the High Council of Britannia, to the citizens of each town. On a personal level, individual citizens are examining their own lives, deciding for themselves how they were touched by the Guardian's influence, and what came of it. Some cities, such as New Magincia, were relatively untouched by the devastation. Others fared far worse. One of the slowest areas of Reconstruction is Buccaneer's Den — it is as if all the evil ferreted out in other towns has fled there and made itself at home. Although it appears a more pleasant place to live than it was a year ago, it remains a hub of smuggling and piracy. Jhelom is another tumultuous area, as civic leaders work hard to tame the town's violent spirit and harness it to make Britannia's dangerous landscape safer. The town of Cove is a much happier case — Nastassia, woeful guardian of the Shrine of Compassion, has come out of her seclusion, and is now busy leading the clean up of nearby Lock Lake, one of the worst hit areas. In Britain, Mayor Patterson, although a Fellowship member, remained in office after the Black Gate fell. I must say he has done an excellent job since that time; Britannia's largest town thrives under his leadership. Minoc, the town of artisans, is now flourishing, thanks to a rebalance of trade practices in that town. Mayor Burnside reports that work is also in progress to reform labor policy in the nearby mines. Moonglow regrets the temporary loss of one of its famous twin scholars — Nelson is in Britain for a year, to study the extensive archives of Castle British. However, Moonglow, home of both the Lycaeum and Brion's observatory, continues to be a center of scholarly activity. I would encourage aspiring scholars and sorcerers alike to study there. In the small farming community of Paws, the fall of The Fellowship had one regrettable consequence — the closing of Feridwyn's shelter for the poor. Though embittered by the loss, Feridwyn and his wife are hard at work raising the money necessary to reopen the establishment, this time without the policy of exclusion to non-Fellowship members. As of this writing, we are still waiting to see the sad isle of Skara Brae resettled, after the tragic accident that destroyed its entire population. Thus far, none have proven bold enough to occupy a house on this once-haunted isle.

LEADERS OF BRITANNIA

Although Britannia began as a monarchy, Lord British soon altered his government to include a constitution, and a Council made up of one representative from each of the eight towns of Britannia. To this day, Britannia is governed largely on a local level, by the mayor of each town — it seems there is little need for Lord British to take a hand, except in times of crisis. It is true, however, that the Eight Virtues set the standard for just government in Britannia. When the highest officials meet, it is at Castle British, and it is there that Lord British's personal staff resides. Any citizen of Britannia should know a certain amount about its most prominent citizens, and I enclose herein a brief list. The downfall of The Fellowship sent many of our prominent citizens into disgrace, and led to an extensive political reorganization, and thus it would profit any Britannian citizen to reacquaint him- or herself with the leading citizens of the land. Some of these people hold high office, and some wander the land without specific responsibilities. All, though, have played a prominent role in Britannia's past, and, in this time of Reconstruction, are responsible for shaping its future.



Lord British heads the Great Council. Like the Avatar, he is a native of the world called Earth, and as a result he enjoys a much longer lifespan than native Britannians. Since the earliest days of Sosaria he has lead his people, and through his great wisdom gradually rose to become Britannia's philosopher-king.

Lord Draxinusom is still titular head of the Gargoyle nation, even though the organization of the Gargoyle people has grown more and more diffuse since they were forced to move to Britannia. All still respect him as a wise ruler who saw his people through their most difficult period.

SIR DUPRé, who recently became a Knight of the Realm, has been a battle-companion to the Avatar since the days of Exodus. He is as dependable a fighter (and drinking companion) as one could wish for.

FERIDWYN, a native of Paws, has only recently been acknowledged as one of Britannia's most philanthropic citizens. A former Fellowship member, he is one of the few who actually succeeded in using The Fellowship's resources for the good of the community, by establishing a shelter for the destitute.

Geoffrey first achieved fame fighting at the Stranger's side during the Quest of the Avatar. In recent years he has become one of Lord British's most trusted aides, as well as his chief bodyguard.

Iolo the bard has been a companion to the Avatar since the days of Mondain's assault. Like the Avatar and Lord British, he was born on Earth, although he has chosen to spend his life here in Britannia.

Julia the tinker is widely known as a mechanical genius, in addition to the fame of her heroic conduct in the recent time of crises in Britannia . Her temper, too, is legendary.

Miranda is one of only three women on the Great Council of Britannia, and is perhaps the most progressive of Britannia's leaders. She is an outspoken supporter of an equal role for women in Britannian society, and also serves with distinction in ameliorating Britannia's environmental crises.

Nelson, although temporarily in Britain, heads the Lycaeum at Moonglow, and is widely considered to be the most accomplished scholar in Britannia, with the possible exception of the Gargoyle Inforlem.

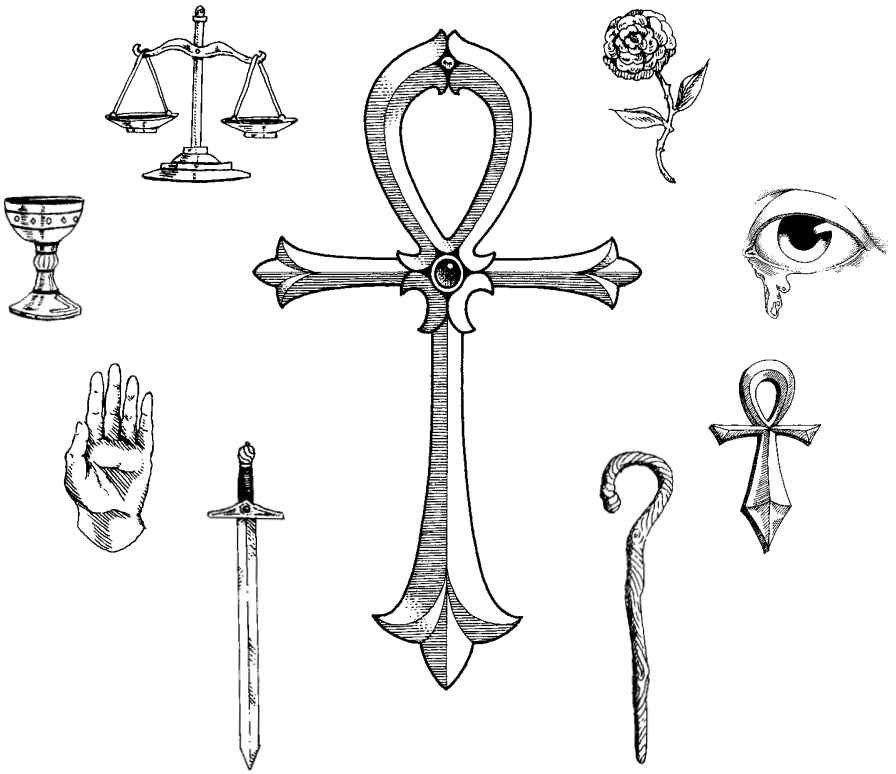
I, Nystul must perforce, though with humility and with no small amount of embarrassment, include my own name in the account, as Court Magician to Lord British.

Patterson is mayor of the town of Britain, largest city in Britannia. Although Patterson was elected largely due to his extensive backing from The Fellowship, he has since proved himself a worthy and able mayor, and retained his office after The Fellowship was dissolved.

Lady Tory is a person of remarkable empathic ability. A resident of Serpent's Hold, she is frequently sought out for advice on personal matters.

OTHER PLANES OF REALITY

The extraplanar menace of the Guardian has awakened in us a new awareness of the existence of other planes. It has long been known that some such as the Avatar and Lord British travel back and forth between the worlds of Earth and Britannia via the Moongates, but it is now evident that there are many more dimensions to the multiverse than just these two. Clearly, Earth is a plane more accessible to Britannia than most others, but why this should be, and what other planes lie nearby is as yet an open question. It has also been observed that events and even individual people on Earth and in Britannia resemble one another to a degree not understandable as coincidence. It seems that in many respects the two planes exist in parallel to one another, as if a certain principle of symmetry or connectedness operates among planes that come in contact with one another. Or perhaps in this case causality lies in the other direction — planes which resemble one another are more likely to come into contact with one another.



VIRTUES

The Eight Virtues represent the highest ideals of Britannian society, as delimited by Lord British, and one of the major goals of the reconstruction is their recovery and continued practice. Most Britannians strayed far from the path of Virtue during the time of the Black Gate, and it remains to be seen whether those coming of age at this time shall be able to recapture the pursuit of Virtue. It is hoped that the Avatar will lead by example in this effort, ever fulfilling and re-fulfilling the Quest of the Avatar: to strive for mental, physical and ethical perfection, and to battle both the evil within oneself and that outside in the world.

The Eight Virtues are here set forth in short form, with the hope that these brief explanations convey something of the spirit of each virtue. However, the most profound understanding of any virtue is not to be found on a printed page, but must rather be discovered through experience in the world. The most precise exposition of the nature of virtue conveys little when compared to the compelling example of someone truly practicing virtue in his or her dealings with others.

Honesty is the pursuit of truthfulness, with respect to oneself and with respect to other beings.

Compassion is the quality of empathy, of recognizing and sharing the feelings of others.

Valor is the courage to uphold virtue, even in the face of a physical or psychological threat.

Justice is the wisdom that perceives what is right and wrong in human action.

Sacrifice is the placing of the interests of others and the ends of virtue over one's own well-being.

Honour is the courage to stand for truth regardless of the circumstances.

Spirituality is a concern for one's own inner being, and awareness of the love that unites one's own inner being to those around one.

Humility is the recognition of the worthiness of all beings, and the perception of one's own place among them, regardless of one's own personal accomplishments or mistakes in the world.

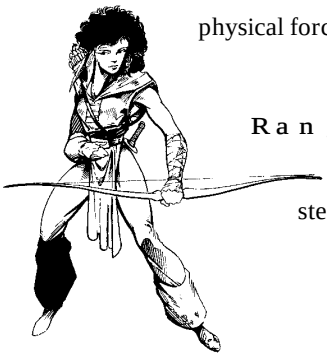
The Eight Virtues may be summarized in the form of three great Principles: Truth, Love and Courage.

CHARACTER CLASSES

For those who wish to include travel and adventure in your lives, there are a number of professions open to you, each focusing on the practice and perfection of a given set of skills.

Mages. Members of my own profession, the mages, devote themselves to the manipulation of magical forces to achieve their ends. Intelligence is the sine qua non of the magic-user, useful for learning and casting magic spells, and also for devising original ways to apply a familiar spell to a knotty problem.

Fighters. Fighters. Fighters devote themselves wholly to all forms of the art of physical combat: unarmed fighting, hand-to-hand weapons and missile weapons. Their power over others consists in their unparalleled excellence in the manipulation and application of physical forces.



Rangers. Rangers tend to be loners, solitary heroes schooled in woodcraft and natural lore. Experts in stealth and tracking, in the wilds they are deadly foes.

ShepHerds. Shepherds are drawn from fiercely independent rural peoples. Often forced to fight wild animals and hostile neighbors to defend their flocks, their simplicity and humility can be deceptive. They vary widely in their abilities — some are skilled in folk magic, others in combat, still others in stealth and woodcraft.

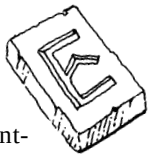
Bards. Bards travel the land, learning of brave and extraordinary deeds (often committing a few themselves along the way) and preserving their memory in song. Not only are they learned and quick-tongued, but anyone who travels on foot as much as they do should be able to hold their own in a fight, and perhaps hurl a spell or two when the need arises.

Druids. Because of their devotion to and understanding of nature, druids are a much-needed profession after Britannia's time of environmental devastation. Most druids do not go heavily armored, and rely instead on their mastery of spell-casting and woodcraft to evade combat, or utilize their surroundings to their own tactical advantage.

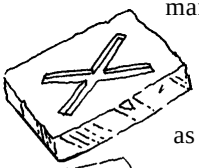
Paladins. Paladins are a specialized group of fighters, devoted to physical fighting on behalf of the cause of virtue. The ideological basis of their combat training lends them a heroic charisma which often wins others to their cause. Their courage and perseverance in the face of evil often wins them the victory, where warriors of less firm conviction fail.

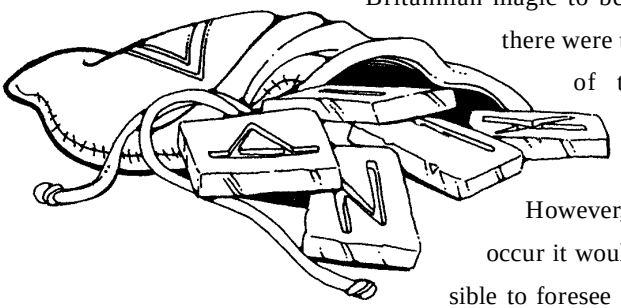
Tinkers. A tinker is skilled at all manner of crafts and mechanical tricks. For survival they rely on their thorough knowledge of traps and locks, and their ability to repair damaged weapons and armor.

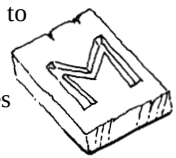
MAGIC



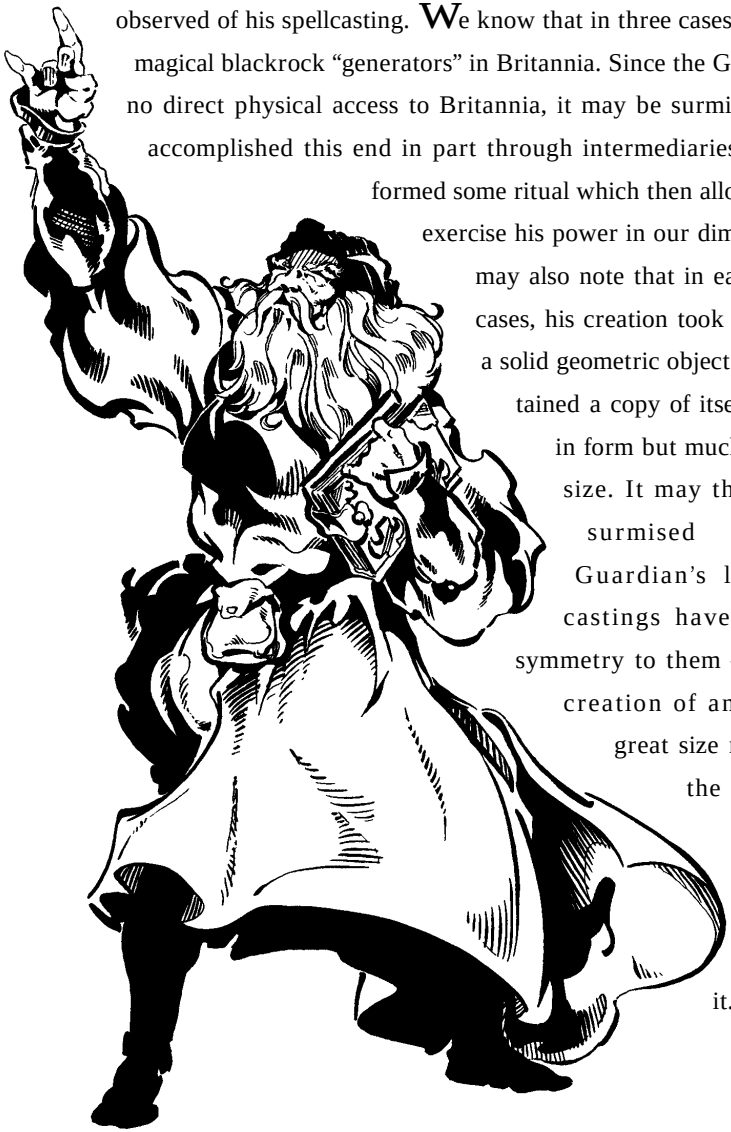
Since my recovery from the Guardian's assault, I have been exploring several new aspects of the magic arts. While most citizens of Britannia are familiar with the more common, reagent-based system of magic, I expect that few are acquainted with the surprising implications of my latest research. The first of these is the existence of runic magic, a form of spellcasting which originated in the Great Stygian Abyss. It is suspected that the catastrophic magical events which occasioned the creation of the Abyss weakened the walls that normally exist among the many dimensions of reality, and this weakening altered the laws governing spellcasting that normally hold true for our own reality. In the practice of runic magic, there are no reagents to act as physical ingredients to the spell, and no magic syllables to be spoken. The principal component of runic sorcery is the runestone, a small rock inscribed with one of the twenty-four known runes. Each of these runes has its own significance, a particular meaning and application, which when combined with other runes becomes articulated in a spell, a focused release of magical energy which accomplishes a particular effect on the world. The casting of the spell is accomplished through a complicated set of hand gestures. Even if a runic mage obtains all the correct runestones for a given spell, the appropriate gestures may yet be beyond his or her skill. It is a mastery of this element of the casting process that separates the accomplished mage from the neophyte. Currently, runic magic is still too weak, too alien to the known laws of Britannian magic to be effective. If, however, there were to be another weakening of the interdimensional walls, the knowledge might become useful. However, if this were to occur it would be impossible to foresee how the rules







of runic magic might alter, which spells would become easier or more difficult to cast, and whether new spells might become possible. I have also been investigating an entirely new realm of magic, one with its own principles and limitations: the immensely powerful, large-scale magical castings employed by the Guardian in his assault on Britannia. Although no Britannian wizard possesses anywhere near the amount of mana necessary to use magic on such a scale, it is possible to deduce certain principles governing the Guardian's magic from what we observed of his spellcasting. We know that in three cases, he created magical blackrock "generators" in Britannia. Since the Guardian has no direct physical access to Britannia, it may be surmised that he accomplished this end in part through intermediaries, who performed some ritual which then allowed him to exercise his power in our dimension. We may also note that in each of these cases, his creation took the form of a solid geometric object which contained a copy of itself, identical in form but much smaller in size. It may therefore be surmised that the Guardian's large-scale castings have a certain symmetry to them — that the creation of an object of great size necessitates the creation of a smaller, similar object within it.



BESTIARY

Since the Guardian's corrupting influence touched our land, Britannia has once again been blighted with all manner of dangerous beings, which menace those who would stray far from our cities and towns, or venture underground. These entities, some animal, some sentient and even some vegetable life, live apart from our ordered society, and prey on unwary travelers. As part of the reconstruction, we hope to civilize the more intelligent of Britannia's monsters, and eliminate those which prove hopelessly vicious. In particular, the Avatar's exploration of the Great Stygian Abyss demonstrated that trolls and goblins are quite reasonable, and are capable of interacting successfully with civilized beings. What follows is partly the result of a systematic investigation on my part, but largely a matter of folk tales and hearsay.

Bats

Bats are small flying mammals, almost completely blind, who navigate by means of high-pitched squeaking noises — it is not known whether magic is involved in this process. They are active only in darkness, and tend to live in deep forest or underground terrain.

We know of two major varieties of bat. *Cave bats* are small and have a relatively mild disposition — they will usually only attack if provoked. Although hard to hit, they can do very little damage to a properly armored opponent, and can be killed in one blow. They are, of course, more dangerous when found in flocks.

Vampire bats are larger than their cousins, and can also be identified by their red coloration. They are vicious predators, and have been known to stalk and kill human prey. The wise adventurer will remain alert to surprise attacks from above.

Bloodworms

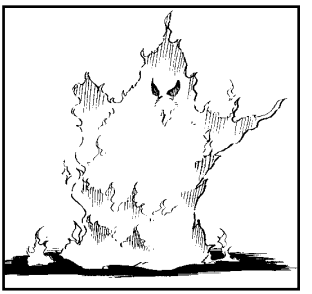
Bloodworms are a revolting menace. They are large (up to three feet long) carnivorous green worms, usually found underground but which occasionally squirm their way up to the surface. They are mindlessly aggressive, and will attack anything living, regardless of its size. Although the bloodworm is easily killed, its bite is extremely venomous — more than one knight has died of it, thinking himself invulnerable to attacks by such lowly vermin.

Daemons

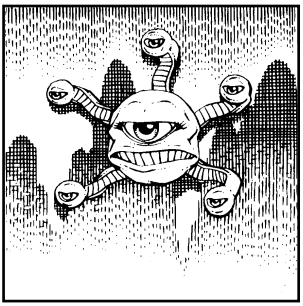
Our plane of existence is occasionally visited by beings known as *daemons*. Very little is known about them, save that they are malevolent and highly intelligent. Most often seen is the *imp*, a small winged being about the size of an Emp, possessed of a perverse sense of humor. Few have seen them up close, as they prefer to circle overhead, dropping stones and hurling bolts of energy at their foes.

Of the other daemons we know almost nothing. A colleague of mine who was investigating old works concerning the summoning of daemons has of late disappeared, and I fear the worst. His notes refer to a being called a “destroyer,” but the notes are largely incoherent.

Elementals.

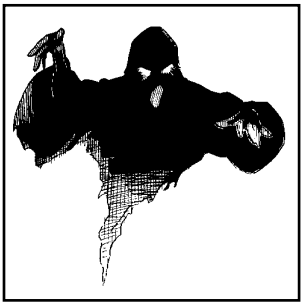


An elemental is a living incarnation of one of the four elements of nature: earth, wind, fire and water. Beyond this, I know little — their origins are unguessable, their motives, inscrutable. When angered, they are capable of unleashing great destructive force.



Gazers

These many-eyed floating spheres are the product of some perverse wizard's madness, or perhaps genius, given that once created the gazers proved well-adapted to the subterranean environment, and have multiplied in profusion. No one knows what they eat, or whether they are intelligent. Some have been observed using magic, but we cannot tell whether this is a learned skill among them, or some sort of innate ability.



Ghosts

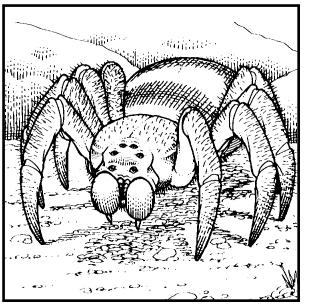
The dead of Britannia do not always lie quietly. Occasionally, one who has died will not depart in good order, but instead something called a ghost will arise in his place. Ghosts are frequently malevolent, and can sap heat from the human body, as if drawing it off into some infinite reservoir of cold. The pale *white ghost* is easily dispersed into air, but the *dire ghost* and the reddish *haunt* have a more tenacious hold on their unnatural existence.

Giant Rats

Away from towns, cities, and domestic settings, rats grow to the size of cats or even small dogs. Such rats usually live underground, eating smaller vermin, scavenging refuse left by other cave-dwellers, even occasionally cooperating to bring down larger prey.

The *giant tan rat* is the most common of these creatures, but in the lower depths a thing called the *great grey rat* has been increasing its numbers. The knight who reported this to us soon succumbed to an unidentifiable feverish disease, perhaps contracted as an infection from the many bites found on her legs and torso.

Giant Spiders



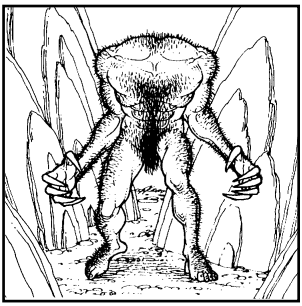
In the underworld, the ordinarily tiny spider can grow to enormous size. The common *giant spider* is grey, and is the size of an extremely large dog. Giant spiders often form mated pairs or larger groupings, which will protect one another in a fight. They rear on their hind legs to bite their opponent. A single giant spider can be a challenge — one should always flee a larger grouping, unless one has the protection of numbers. The *wolf spider* is smaller, but can inject a powerful poison with its bite. It is recognizable by its reddish-brown fur. There are written accounts of a huge, pale white breed of spider dwelling deep in the underworld, dubbed the *dread spider*, but I would tend to dismiss this as hysterical exaggeration.

Goblins

The Goblin race originated in now-forbidden experiments among the earliest wizards of our lands, performed shortly before the period in which magic was banned outright in Britannia. Later, in the Age of Darkness, the man-machine Exodus bred the few remaining goblins into a substantial army with which he threatened the land. After the downfall of Exodus, the goblins fled into seclusion, forming two nations, the Grey and the Green.

When the Age of the Avatar began, Lord British granted clemency to all “monstrous” folk who would pledge to follow the path of Virtue, and it was thus that many goblins came to be accepted as members of our society, although they continued to keep largely to themselves, and to dwell in their own enclaves. I would advise thee, though, to be wary of any goblins you might

meet on the road, far from the protection of a town, as they are a violent people, and some still cling to their old practice of banditry. Taken singly, a goblin is weaker than an average human, but for this reason they frequently travel in groups.



Headless

The headless seem to be the result of a bizarre and cruel prank on the part of some powerful human or possibly nature itself. Headless appear as twisted human bodies, lacking any sort of head or neck. It is not known how they feed, or how they sense the world around them. However, they do have some means of locating an opponent, and once they know a human is near they will almost always fight to the death. They are a vicious abomination, to be pitied and avoided.

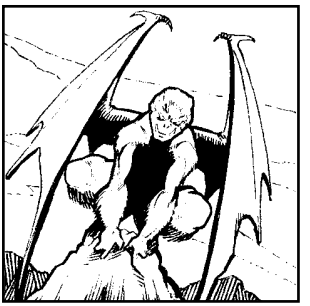
Liches

Occasionally, an extremely old and powerful wizard will choose not to suffer a natural death, but instead become a liche. In such cases, their bodies die, but their minds live on and animate the rotting corpse. Liches are in nearly all cases solitary, most being scholars who carry out magical research in secret. Anyone capable of becoming a liche must already be highly intelligent and a master of arcane knowledge. In most cases, a liche is also completely insane.

Lurkers

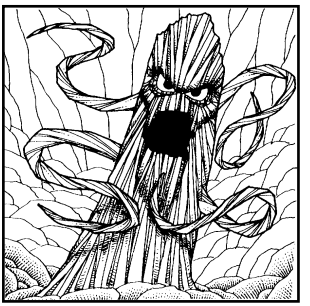
Lurkers are usually seen floating just beneath the surface of a secluded lake or subterranean pool. They rest with their eyes and a few tentacles poking just above the surface, alert for predators or prey. In most cases, lurkers will not bother anyone who does not actually enter the water, although they may track a person's position, and follow along behind him. They present a greater danger in the water, however, as they are well-adapted to water-borne combat, and their body-mass alone is enough to bar a swimmer's way in a narrow strait. As lurkers sink out of sight when killed, it is unclear whether they breath air or water, or what shape their lower body takes.

Mongbats



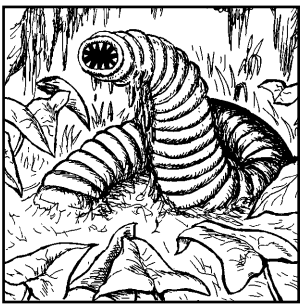
These airborne primates are fast and tough, with a vicious disposition. This hybrid species thrives both below ground and above, where they dwell in rocky and mountainous areas. Apparently the concept of a fair fight is foreign to them, and they prefer to bombard their enemy from above, or swoop in and score a hit, then fly off before their opponent can retaliate. Mongbats are singlehandedly responsible for the fact that the best archers in Britannia dwell near the Serpent Spine mountains.

Reapers



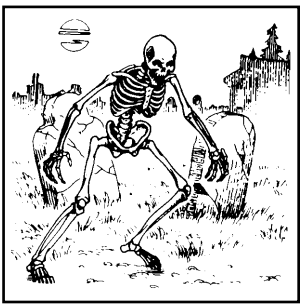
The legends relate that long ago, an enchanted sentient forest sank underground in a great cataclysm, and there the trees that composed it mutated into something that could survive in the underworld. Reapers appear as ambulatory trees, broken and bare of leaves. Their thick limbs can

deliver blows of enormous power, and for all its flexibility their wood is as resistant as any oak or pine. There are a few unconfirmed reports of magic use among the reapers.



Rotworms

The rotworm, cousin to the bloodworm, feeds on decaying organic matter, and thus has no shortage of food in the underworld. These worms will always attack when they sense flesh nearby, but are easily crushed to death with a well-aimed kick. The only danger lies in being overwhelmed by a large number of rotworms clustered around a carcass.



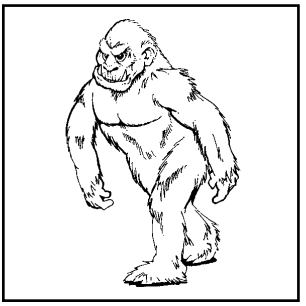
Skeletons

No one knows what makes a human skeleton rise and walk on its own, intent on destroying the living. Some claim to have mastered the art of animating and controlling skeletons, but I have yet to see proof of this. Others theorize that skeletons are not human bones at all, but emerge from the rock itself in human form.

Slugs

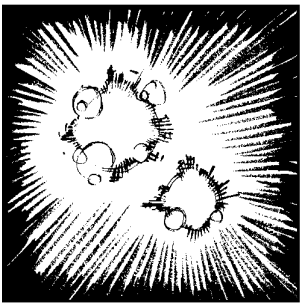
Slugs are little to be feared, only avoided. They writhe mindlessly and senselessly from place to place, feeding on whatever they encounter. Disgustingly enough, the *flesh slug* is a large amorphous blob of gelatin, the color of pale pink human flesh. The greenish *acid slugs* are slightly more dangerous, as they are capable of spitting acid a considerable distance.

Trolls



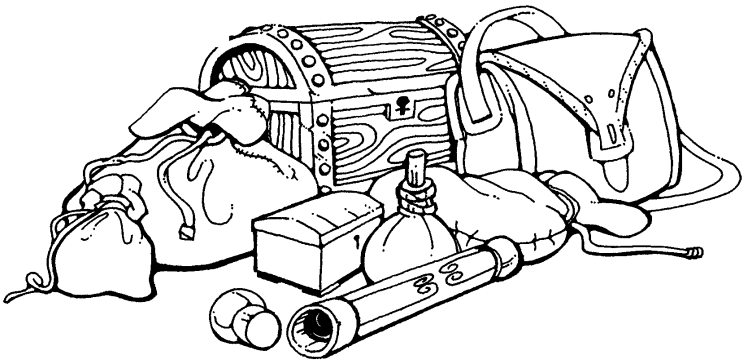
Long hunted and feared as monsters, these giants have only recently been recognized as sentient and, in their own way, civilized. They speak the human tongue and band together in loose tribes. However, there are still many, many trolls that simply wander the landscape preying on smaller, more vulnerable travelers, particularly the rarely sighted *great Troll*. Trolls are generally agreed to be the strongest species to walk on two legs.

Wisps



Little understood by humans, wisps appear to be beings of pure energy, impervious to any physical weapon. They seem to have sources of knowledge that lie beyond our own reality.

I must mention here that the creatures listed above are only those known to frequent Britannia's air, soil and waters. It is not unheard of for monsters from other worlds to wander into our own and menace the population, and thus one should at all times be prepared to encounter unknown foes, with unknown abilities.



In conclusion, *I had not meant to close this document on such a dire note! It is my hope that the information contained in this work shall inspire readers to set forth with hope and confidence along the pathways of Britannia. Our nation, so recently devastated by the Guardian's corruption, now stands ready to be reclaimed and reshaped by the newest generation of adventurers.* For *those who will accept this challenge, there exist countless areas for exploration. The libraries of Castle British and the Lycaeum stand open for those who would read; the unexplored fields, mountains and seas of Britannia lie waiting to be discovered and investigated by those who would travel them. And for those few who would take the risk, the ancient uncharted caverns and waterways beneath Britannia offer both danger and fabulous rewards. I urge you, reader, be less daunted by the risks involved, and more inspired by lands yet unseen, strange, beautiful and, yes, terrible beings and artifacts yet to be found. Be wary of the dangers, but ever mindful of what may be attained by the boldest and most virtuous among you. May thy path be ever smooth, and thy steps never falter.*

Wystful

Court Magician,
in service to Lord British.